

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GILA COUNTY, ARIZONA

Date: September 21, 2004

JOSÉ M. SANCHEZ

Chairman

JOHN F. NELSON

Clerk of the Board

RONALD A. CHRISTENSEN

Vice-Chairman

By: Marilyn Brewer
Deputy Clerk

CRUZ SALAS

Member

Gila County Community
College-Payson, Arizona

PRESENT: José M. Sanchez, Chairman; Ronald A. Christensen, Vice-Chairman; Cruz Salas, Member; John F. Nelson, County Manager/Clerk; and, Patti Wortman, 1st Chief Deputy County Attorney.

The Gila County Board of Supervisors met in Regular Session at 10:00 a.m. this date. Chairman Sanchez asked Vice-Chairman Christensen to chair today's meeting because the meeting location is within Vice-Chairman Christensen's Supervisorial District. Dan Adams led the Pledge of Allegiance and Joe Mendoza delivered the Invocation.

At this time each Board member presented a brief summary of current events as allowed by A.R.S. §38-431.02(K). No action was taken on any items that were presented.

Tommie Martin of EcoRestore, LLC, presented a quarterly update of the Gila County Natural Resources Initiative which included an overview of the Rim Country Community Wildfire Protection Plan (RCCWPP). Ms. Martin stated that the RCCWPP was established in order to qualify for funds under the Healthy Forest Restoration Initiative Act. These funds allow communities to address unhealthy forest issues which include surrounding infrastructure in an effort to reduce wildfire dangers. She advised that the first funding for the RCCWPP will be available in November 2004. There are a variety of entities

involved in the RCCWPP which include the fire chiefs of all the fire districts who began looking at the urban facet of the RCCWPP. There are three facets to this Plan, as follows: 1) urban facet, 2) wild land facet and, 3) wild land urban interface facet. Ms. Martin advised that the fire chiefs began building a body of data to give a clear picture of the approximately 88 urban areas, with 35 or 36 villages within this area. At that same time, Gila County was researching for data for the wild lands and teamed up with Northern Arizona University (NAU). In the last several years a group was formed in the Payson area called the Regional Payson Area Plan (RPAP). A PowerPoint map of the area was presented. She advised that the map showing the footprint for RPAP begins at Pine-Strawberry, runs along the top of the Rim, takes in Christopher-Kohl's, Colcord Estates, comes down and includes Star Valley, Payson, Gisela, and Rye and back up to Pine-Strawberry and includes all of the fire districts in that area. Ms. Martin stated that the RPAP footprint is the primary area that RCCWPP will look at more in depth. Public meetings have been held and will continue to be held in September 2004 to present this wildfire plan to the various communities in northern Gila County. Once this plan is in place, Ms. Martin advised that Gila County would like to look at a similar plan for the Pinal Mountains around Globe, and the Young area, in order to have a complete wildfire protection plan for all the communities in Gila County. At this time Ms. Martin called on Ethan Aumack of the NAU Forest Ecosystem Restoration Analysis (ERA) to give a PowerPoint presentation on a series of maps and analyses showing the work he is doing in conjunction with the various fire departments, and describing how the NAU Forest ERA Project information and tools has assisted with the County's Plan. Mr. Aumack advised that October 15, 2004, is the date scheduled for completion of this project by NAU. This same presentation, through the illustration of various maps on a Smart Board, will be given throughout the communities of northern Gila County to solicit citizen feedback. Mr. Aumack advised that most of the information obtained thus far is for the northern Ponderosa Pine-dominated

areas with plans to move into the Payson area in the near future. The Forest ERA Project was funded with Congressional funds that were passed down to the Ecological Restoration Institute in 2001, and ERA passed those funds to the Applied Ecology Lab at NAU also in 2001. The Applied Ecology Lab at NAU was charged with developing information and tools that could help people think about restoration in a broader context of hundreds of thousands to millions of acres, recognizing that fires are burner larger and larger in this area. He stated, *"We need to be very strategic in addressing challenges related to these large scale wildfires, and planning and implementing restoration fire hazard reduction activities."* As the Healthy Forest Restoration Act was passed, NAU recognized that its information and tools could be used effectively in pulling together community wildfire protection plans. NAU is currently developing information in the way of maps that cover this entire study area from the Kaibab Plateau down to the volcanic field around Flagstaff, along the Mogollon Rim to Gila County and on to New Mexico. Mr. Aumack presented a PowerPoint series of maps showing the following: Map 1) Footprint of County Forest Community Wildlife Protection Plan; Map 2) RCCWPP-Area Description; Map 3) RCCWPP-Assessment of Current Conditions; Map 4) Assessment of Current Conditions-Tree Density; Map 5) Assessment of Current Conditions in Regard to Fire Hazard and Fire Risk; Map 6) Assessment of Current Conditions-Areas Upwind of Communities; Map 7) Assessment of Current Condition-Municipal Watersheds; Map 8) Assessment of Current Conditions-Post-Fire Flooding Potential; Map 9) Threat Analysis-Simple Additive Weighting-Based Overlay Process; Map 10) Threat Analysis-Landscape Parcel-Scale Integration; Map 11) Implementation Strategies-Mock Scenario using rules generated by Flagstaff SWPP planning team; Map 12) Criteria for Implementing Strategies-Fire Behavior, Flooding Potential, Municipal H2O, Community Proximity; Map 13) Landscape-Scale Restoration Discussions. Tommie Martin thanked Mr. Aumack for his presentation. Ms. Martin stated part of this planning is for the County, Fire Districts, Towns, Homeowners

Associations, and people to take this information and use it as a springboard to obtain funds for these projects. Ms. Martin called on Mr. Rob Berry with the Payson Fire Department to speak on high risk communities and what is happening in those particular neighborhoods. He showed maps of areas studied, as follows: 1) Historical Fires; 2) Area Watersheds; 3) Area Vegetation; 4) Fire Hazard; 5) Area Fuel Treatment (all for the RCCWPP), and 6) Area Fire Protection Districts for the study area in Gila County. Ms. Martin stated that the Pine-Strawberry Fire Department is putting together a CD that will be given to each home owner. Ms. Martin then called on Mike Brendt who provided more detailed information on the Pine-Strawberry Fire Department program. Ms. Martin showed a tee shirt with the logo of Billy Brush Fire that is being used to help launch their programs to replace or add to the Smokie the Bear or Woodsie the Owl programs and she advised that the County will be asked to help promote the idea.

Chairman Christensen called for a brief recess at 11:13 a.m.

Chairman Christensen reconvened the meeting at 11:23 a.m. Ms. Martin called on Martin DeMasi, Chief of the Payson Fire Department, and Eric Schwennsen of Range Management International for a few additional comments. Chairman Christensen thanked Ms. Martin for putting together all the information presented. Chairman Christensen stated he works with the federal government on a lot of these issues and serves on the Wildlife Land Leadership Council. He stated, *"This extremely important information will produce a plan that can be presented to the Congress and to the Senate and will be especially helpful when having to make presentations and beg for dollars and appropriations from Congress. When the Healthy Forest bill was passed, then came the request for funding. But no funds have been made available to continue the project on the ground."* Chairman Christensen expressed his frustration in working with the Forest Service and the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) in getting people to understand the need to get work done on the ground, not just working on plans. Chairman Christensen stated, *"We also have those groups*

who do not see the urgency of the problem, so scientifically we must be able to present these problems and sell them to the Congressmen who have no idea of these types of problems.” He further stated it is quite important that studies are being conducted and he stressed the need for the County to partner with entities such as NAU and the fire departments due to the County’s lack of available resources. Supervisor Sanchez stated this has to be an educational process for those who will be providing the funding at the congressional level. He stated that awareness doesn’t become as acute until a fire occurs, but the County needs to be planning now to minimize the effects. Supervisor Salas stated he is totally amazed at how much data has been gathered so far in using NAU to assist in developing these plans, and he is appreciative of the involvement with NAU and the joint partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. Chairman Christiansen called on Dan Adams who stated: *“Here we are accepting forest fires as a disaster that we can’t do anything about like they’re a hurricane. We know something can be done about these forest fires...that forest could be thinned out to the way it was and we wouldn’t have any problem with a major aggressive ground fire.” ...We shouldn’t be having to go to Washington to get money to run our forests; the forests, as an asset, should be making money for us...”* Chairman Christensen stated he feels there has been a failure on the part of the management of the federal land and he is frustrated by the response of Congress, but work on these issues must continue.

Marco Olsen, Chief of the Tri-City Fire Department, came before the Board to make an oral presentation regarding the possibility of adopting an ordinance to regulate the removal of rubbish, trash, debris, dilapidated buildings, etc., according to the provisions within ARS § 11-268. Chief Olsen distributed a Hazard Reduction Plan which consisted of applicable statutes for dilapidated buildings, etc., along with letters of support of this ordinance and pictures of dilapidated buildings in the Tri-City Fire District. The adoption of this ordinance would apply to all of the unincorporated areas of Gila County. If adopted, the Tri-City Fire Department could take action in its area by first

identifying these targets and contacting the property owners to clean those properties. If the owners do not clean up their properties, the County would clean them up and assess the clean-up charges incurred to the property owners in the form of a lien on the property. Chief Olsen stated the benefits of this ordinance would include inspiring adjacent owners to clean up their premises, and cleaned up areas could be sold, adding tax dollars to Gila County. He further stated that implementing an ordinance would strengthen any action taken by the Fire Department. Supervisor Salas said that ninety percent of the dilapidated areas are in his supervisorial district, and he feels the Board of Supervisors needs to support this effort. Supervisor Salas stated he believes the Board should talk to the surrounding cities and towns to be in partnership with the County on working together in addressing these problems. Supervisor Sanchez stated, *“When we have these types of ordinances sometimes we encounter a lot of resistance. A lot of enforcement will have to be directed from the health side. Public hearings will need to be held, and the Board of Supervisors will need to generate a lot of community support, and the County will need to generate grants and funding to get this going through all the processes necessary.”* Chairman Christensen stated there are a lot of absentee owners in northern Gila County, so it’s been extremely difficult to get these people to respond. Chairman Christensen also stated that from his past experience, the word gets around quite rapidly when a few examples of the worst case scenarios are made public. He stated that he fully supports the concept, but the ordinance procedures will have to be clearly defined and then enforced. John Nelson stated that he is working with seven other counties to develop similar procedures and has copies of three of those ordinances. Mr. Nelson stated it would be his recommendation that although this is not a part of the Planning & Zoning code, this effort needs to be coordinated with the Planning & Zoning Commission whereby public hearings will be held and a formal recommendation will be presented to the Board. Mr. Nelson stated: *“One concern the staff has is with the compliance and enforcement section. We*

do have authority with liens on properties, we tear down buildings or clean up brush, but the enforcement compliance section, I believe, would be costly, would take staff, and I would recommend that if we go this way, we go for a full-cost reimbursement and charge also those programs against the home owners and property owners. I would recommend that we proceed with this issue through the Planning & Zoning Commission.” Supervisor Salas stated he would like to recommend that before this proposed ordinance goes to the Planning and Zoning Commission, it would be appropriate for the Board of Supervisors to conduct a work session to involve and solicit input from the Sheriff’s Department, Planning & Zoning Department, the Health Department and the County Attorney’s Office. The Planning and Zoning Department would then have additional information and a Board recommendation to be presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission. Supervisor Sanchez asked Fire Chief Olsen if his report was concentrated primarily on the Globe-Miami Area. Fire Chief Olsen responded that his report is strictly from the Tri-City Fire District area only. Chairman Christensen stated that any ordinance adopted by the Board of Supervisors would apply to the entire County. Dan Adams suggested getting homeowner association groups to support this ordinance, but Supervisor Sanchez stated there are no homeowner groups in southern Gila County; however, neighborhood groups could be formed to assist. Tom Melcher of the Globe Sheriff’s Department stated that the fire districts should also be involved in the process, as he feels the fire districts will be the primary inspection vehicle for these areas. Chairman Christensen agreed with the importance of including the fire districts. He stated there will be many more public hearings before an ordinance is adopted.

Upon motion by Supervisor Salas, seconded by Supervisor Sanchez, the Board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda, items A through B, as follows:

- A. Approved a #12 Liquor License Application submitted by James M. Richey for the Pine Verde Mexican Restaurant located in Pine, Arizona.

B. Approved an Application submitted by Tamara Logsdon of HTNB Ventures, LLC dba Rimside Grill to temporarily extend the patio of Rimside Grill from October 1-3, 2004.

There being no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, Chairman Christensen adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m.

Ronald Christensen, Acting Chairman

ATTEST:

John F. Nelson, County Manager/Clerk